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Adrian C. Boult
London

A HANDBOOK on ~

The Technique of Conducting.

BY

ADRIAN C. BOULT.

Brigham Young University

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ADRIAN C. BOULT.


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PREFACE.

THIS Handbook has been drawn up for members of the Conducting Class at the Royal College of Music. Its object is to place in the hands of students an essay on the underlying principles of the technique of conducting which have up to the present been explained to them verbally, and thus to provide a series of texts for discussion on Wednesday afternoons. For this reason practically no examples have been quoted, and the language is telegraphic: perhaps a larger work may be called for when these notes have been well tested.

It may be well also to remind students of the purpose for which the class was founded. There is no idea of bringing up here a school of virtuoso conductors. At the present time in England the number of people who can fairly be said to earn their living as conductors of concerts can be counted on the fingers of one hand, and opera and theatre engagements are also much limited and by no means easy to get. The object, then, of this class is to enable organists and schoolmasters to make good use of any opportunities of conducting that may come their way. Outside London it is almost always possible for any musician of energy to found and direct a Choral Society, an amateur String Orchestra, or even both, and it is at the public performances of these bodies, when probably a certain amount of professional help is added, that the man with no technique finds himself in difficulties, but the clever conductor can achieve remarkable results. There is very little chance of making a living out of conducting, but there is every chance for most people to get a great deal of pleasure out of it in their spare time.

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Section 1.—Technique.

THE OBJECT OF TECHNIQUE IN ALL ART IS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE DESIRED END WITH THE GREATEST SIMPLICITY AND ECONOMY OF MEANS. This is as much true in conducting as in anything else. In every kind of art one learns, by means of exercises and books showing the accumulated thought of previous generations, how it has been found that certain results can be obtained with less effort than had previously been thought necessary. Conducting is a modern development, but it is surely time to register impressions formed from watching the greatest conductors of the present day, in order to draw up certain rules of technique which, like all other rules, will be improved and perhaps destroyed by subsequent generations. This is now attempted in the present handbook and I should be glad to receive suggestions of all kinds in case a larger edition is called for later.

Twenty-five years ago it was considered adequate for a conductor to beat time with his stick in his right hand and with his left to give any necessary indications of expression that might not have been properly arranged at rehearsal. Except as regards pace the conductor was indeed almost powerless unless he had had adequate time for rehearsal. The modern orchestra or chorus is a very different kind of instrument—it will for instance take a sign at rehearsal where formerly it needed a verbal explanation and possibly even a double repetition of the passage. Rehearsals are reduced very much in number, and it is now quite usual, though never satisfactory, for a difficult programme lasting two hours to be rehearsed in three. The conductor has, therefore, had to learn to show his ideas on the interpretation of a work by means of his stick and hand: in fact, it is now almost true to say that if one watched the cinema film of a good conductor at work one could tell what he was conducting without hearing the music. This, of course, is a very different thing from suggesting that the audience should watch the conductor at a concert. His work must be directed towards the eyes of his orchestra and only towards the ears of his audience.

Section 2.—Position.

It has probably occurred to most people that there is a very striking difference in the power with which singers are able to get hold of their audience, but few will believe that this is not only a question of personality. As a very general rule, the singer who leans back has far more difficulty in making good than the singer who leans forward. It seems very well to throw your chest out and your shoulders back in order to

breathe freely, but this can really be done better when the weight of the body is on the front part of the foot and not on the heel. The motive power of the song is thus directed straight at the audience, whereas the singer who leans back throws his weight upwards and over the heads of the majority of his hearers sitting in the stalls. This exactly applies to conducting. Your players are usually below your hand and you cannot get hold of them unless you lean towards them, taking care to keep the head and shoulders back, in order to avoid a crouching attitude. With a chorus the matter is different, but it is perfectly possible to conduct a chorus high above you and yet lean forward, or even stand on the toes, though this is not necessary. Indeed, Sir Henry Wood has been kind enough to suggest that a warning should be added here against too much standing on the toes. It is apt to bring on cramp during a long day's rehearsal. He himself finds it best to keep the weight always firmly on the heels.

Another thing to guard against is the foolish looking habit of "giving" at the knees. It is easy to think that extra emphasis is put into a down beat by a slight loosening at the knee, but a glance at anyone else who does this will put an end to this belief. The same can also be said of the habit of walking about while conducting. An occasional movement may do no harm, but the less of this the better.

It is well for conductors to bear in mind what may be aptly called the LINE OF SIGHT. This is rarely a straight line, but it should never be bent too far from the straight. It runs from the conductor's eye to the point of his stick and on to the eye of the particular player or the central or chief person of the group he is conducting.

Before leaving the question of position, it would be well for a conductor to find at once a comfortable REST POSITION, that is to say, a position in which he waits for silence before beginning a performance, which is also the centre of his movements in conducting. The hand should be a short distance above the desk, which should not be high enough to interfere with easy movement, but can be used sometimes as a support for the hand, and must be in a convenient position for counting out empty bars when accompanying songs and concertos. The Line of Sight at the Rest Position should be bent downwards in the middle, though not too much so. That is to say, the point of the stick should find itself in a straight line drawn from the eye of the conductor to the eye of the player sitting immediately in front of him. The Rest Position is not immovable: for instance, at the beginning of a work involving only a part of the orchestra, say the first violins, both the Line of Sight and the Rest Position are turned towards them.

Section 3.—The Stick.

We saw in Section 2 that the point of the stick is the intermediate point in the line of sight. Students must beware of changing this to the hand or the butt end of the stick. It is so easy when the music becomes *appassionato* to move the hand vigorously and let the stick follow it aimlessly. The result of this is that the eye of the performer is attracted rather to the hand than to the point of the stick, the stick is useless, and the ensemble suffers.

There is no reason why anyone who wishes should not conduct without a stick. With small choirs and orchestras very beautiful results can be obtained in a way that could not be done if a stick were used, for the human hand is more expressive than a piece of wood, and this is readily felt by responsive players who are near enough to the conductor. The point is surely this: properly used the stick is simply an extra joint, a lengthening of the arm. It follows that in cases where the stickless conductor would use the whole forearm for a gesture, with his wrist at some 20 inches from his chest, the conductor with a stick can achieve the same result with his arm practically still and his wrist 4 or 5 inches from the chest. The stick, like the gear box of a motor car, will save a great deal of energy provided it is properly used.

We have seen that the stick should be regarded as an EXTRA JOINT. There will therefore be four pivots in a conductor's arm: knuckles, wrist, elbow and shoulder. It is perfectly possible for the rhythm and expression to be clearly shown in a *piano* or *pianissimo* passage by means of the fingers alone. It is a useful exercise (see Section 6) to hold the right hand perfectly still (with the left) and see how much space can be covered by a rotary movement of the stick directed entirely by the fingers. It is surprising what a little practice will do in this direction. Similarly the forearm can be held just above the wrist and a wider circle drawn. The grip in this case, as always, should be perfectly loose like the grip of a violin bow. It will thus be seen that quiet passages can easily be dealt with by means of the hand and wrist alone, with perhaps the slightest sympathetic movement of the forearm pivoting from the elbow which itself need not move at all. As the loudness of the music increases more of the arm will be called into play, until for the heaviest *fortissimo* effects the whole arm will swing from the shoulder. It is to be carefully remembered that when the whole arm is moving every joint must remain perfectly loose and must contribute to the movement. In fact a proportion must always be kept between the movements of the different joints. The point of the stick must travel farther than the fingers and, as it were, round the fingers, the fingers farther than

the wrist, the wrist farther than the elbow and the elbow round the shoulder, which can itself never move.

Another thing should be borne in mind in connection with the relation of joint to joint. The most important thing to show in conducting is usually said to be the first beat of the bar. This is to some extent true, but, as in conducting almost everything must be anticipated, it would be more true to say that the preparation for the first beat of the bar—in fact, the last beat of the previous bar—is even more important. It is a useful rule to make that if the detail, that is to say, the second and third beat in a four-bar, is being shown by a movement from the fingers, the wrist should show the more important rise and fall of 4, 1. If the detail comes from the wrist, the forearm pivoting from the elbow should show 4, 1. By this means each new bar is clearly shown to those players who are counting silent bars, and, what is far more important, those who are playing are stimulated by a forward movement in each bar. It is really true to say that every bar begins with its second beat and ends with the first beat of the next bar. Music leans forward and its course might be compared to a cascade down a salmon ladder pushing forward to the edge of each step and then dropping to the step below, 2, 3, 4, 1 : 2, 3, 4, 1.

Section 4.—Grasp of the Stick.

The proportions of everybody's fingers and thumbs are different, and it is difficult to lay down any hard and fast rule as to how the stick should be held. Each person must find out for himself (and it will probably take a long time to do so), exactly what weight, length and thickness of stick makes it possible for him to get the best control of its movement with the smallest effort. Most conductors prefer it to be light in weight, and all singers and players like it light in colour. A cork handle is to be recommended if the hand is inclined to perspiration, as the stick becomes difficult to hold if the fingers are at all moist and this will certainly encourage stiffness. Perhaps a good working rule is to try and secure an equilateral or at least an isosceles triangle at the three points of contact with the stick, for two fingers and the thumb are usually enough to give a firm grip. The apex of this triangle is the thumb and the base a line between the first and second fingers. This gives a great deal of freedom and is an easy position from which to change the grasp if there is any feeling of stiffness. Professor Nikisch, whose ease in controlling the stick is most remarkable, seems to hold his stick as an elongation of his thumb : it almost looks as if they were tied together. The stick should not be held too near the point of balance as it then tends to swing itself and get out of control.

The feel of the stick will only come after a great deal of practice; but this can be encouraged by holding the stick and playing with it at all sorts of times when reading or talking and not really thinking of what the hand is doing. Unconscious freedom is thereby developed.

Section 5.—Movement.

The few articles that exist on conducting, including Berlioz's handbook, give the technical movements in the very simple forms in which they appear in diagrams 1 and 5. These are reproduced as an indication of the fundamental direction of thought implied in the different movements of the stick.

Generally speaking the movement of the stick is an *accelerando* from each beat to the next, that is to say, the moment when the stick moves slowest is the moment after it has "clicked" on the beat, and its fastest moment is immediately before the next click. It must be borne in mind that a click is not necessarily a jerk: in fact in *legato* playing the click is produced by the very slightest movement of the fingers, and wherever a chord is sustained (or there is silence) through several beats, it is not necessary to click on these.

Great care must be taken that the stick never stops in the middle of a bar, as this is certain to interfere with the smooth run of the rhythm. Even in *ritardandi* it should be avoided; in fact a complete stoppage of the stick should only occur when the rhythm is definitely broken—in a *ritardando* it is only bent, and the curve of the bend would be spoilt if the point of the stick were allowed to keep still even for a moment.

The diagrams have been arranged in a rather peculiar order, which is really that of difficulty. It has been said that Figure 1 shows a skeleton of three beats in a bar, but the actual movement of the stick is approximately as Figure 2, the click usually being, not at the final corner of the movement as Figure 1, but on the way there. This point will be specially discussed at the end of this section in the paragraph on *legato*.

Figures 3 and 4 are simply sub-divisions of Figure 2. Figure 3 deals with a slow $\frac{3}{2}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$, six in a bar and Figure 4 with nine in a bar.

Figure 5 is the skeleton of 4 beats in a bar and Figure 6 its translation into real life. Sub-divisions of these are shown in Figures 7 and 8.

Six in a bar in compound duple time, that is to say $\frac{6}{8}$ and $\frac{6}{4}$, is shown in Figure 9, though here sometimes the upward turn of direction

is made before the fifth beat instead of after it. I think this is a mistake, as more space is always wanted for the sixth beat, in preparation for the new bar.

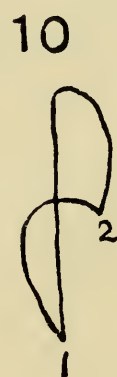
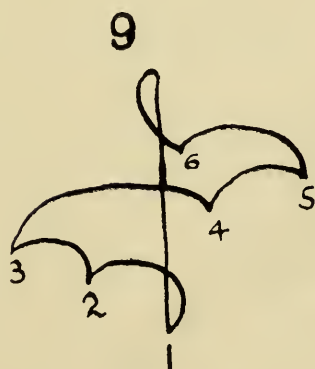
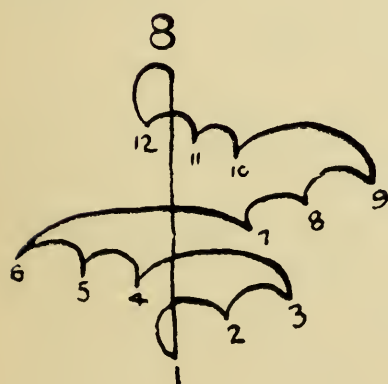
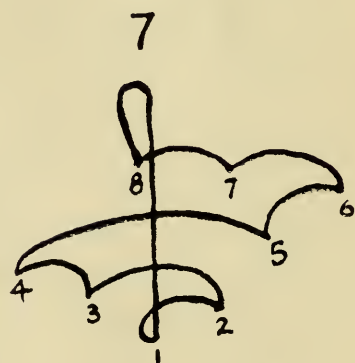
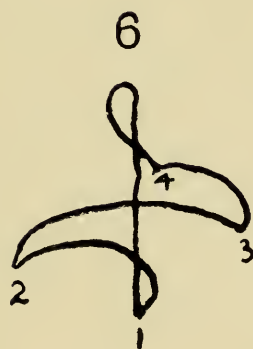
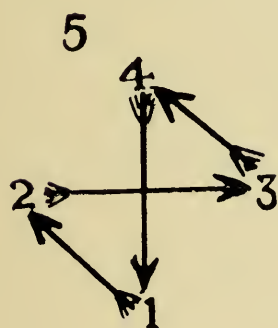
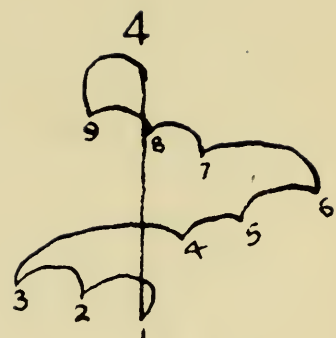
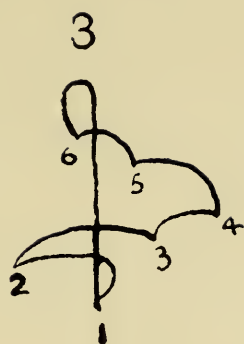
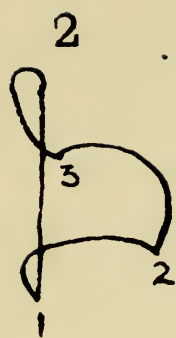
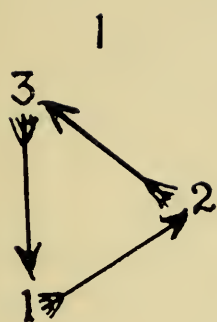
Figure 9 is thus a ternary sub-division of 2 beats in a bar. A binary sub-division of this is of course 4 in a bar (Figure 6) and this brings us to a difficulty. Two in a bar is usually conducted with the down beat inclined to the right and the up-beat swinging over to the left. The reason for this is that the position of the conductor's desk makes it easier for him to beat downwards towards the right. I am of opinion that an enormous amount of technical difficulty can be overcome if the habit is acquired of conducting 2 in a bar in the opposite direction to this, basing it in fact on Figure 5 and its derivatives Figures 6—9. This will result in Figure 10 in slow and moderate tempo, while for a fast 2 the second beat will probably drop nearer the first.

The acceptance of Figure 10 simplifies very many problems, for it involves the establishment of a rule that in every bar in every kind of music the strongest beat is the down beat and the second strongest is the beat to the right. This will be seen to have been followed in every case so far and will be increasingly useful as the development of the art takes rhythmical complications in the direction of 5, 7, and even more minute subtleties.

Figures 11 and 12 show 5 in a bar and here, according to the above rule, if the bar is 3 plus 2 the fourth beat will be taken to the right as in Figure 11; if the bar is 2 plus 3 the third beat will go to the right as in Figure 12. If, however, the pace is too fast to allow of the easy insertion of 5 clicks in each bar, it is quite simple to let drop any of the subordinate beats until in really fast movements Figure 10 will be found most adequate, though the two clicks will naturally not be equi-distant. It is often a help to think of a fast five bar in terms of a pendulum clock which is standing crooked. The irregular ticks will give the ratio of 2:3 which underlies almost every five-rhythm. There is also a tendency to make the fifth beat too long—with the result that the bar becomes practically six. Care must therefore be taken not to make the up beat with too much elbow.

Seven in a bar is shown in Figures 13 and 14, and again the same sub-division produces the same result. It will be seen in each case that the scheme is almost identical with Figure 7, that is, 8 beats in a bar with one left out.

Figure 15 shows a rather exceptional case. I found in conducting the orchestral version of Mr. Arnold Bax's "In a Vodka Shop," that the underlying rhythm seemed to be ternary. It was 3 in a bar with an extra half beat at the end (2 plus 2 plus 3). Thus, when rehearsing the



work slowly it is necessary to adopt Figure 15, that is to say, to base it on Figure 1.

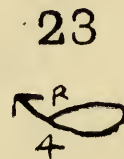
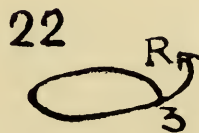
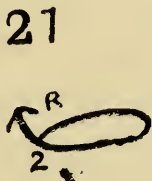
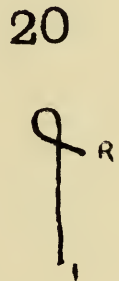
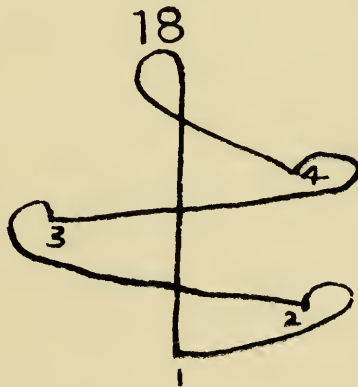
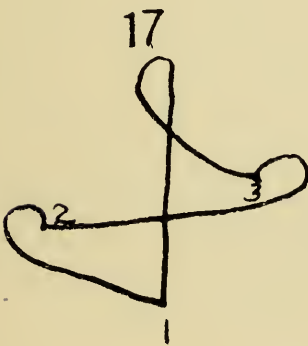
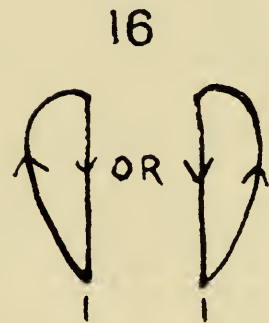
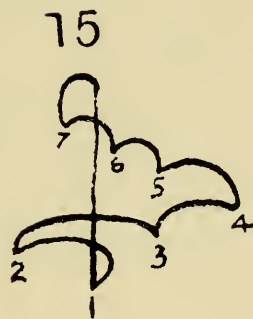
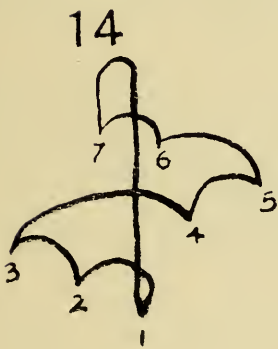
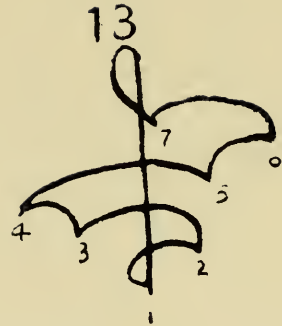
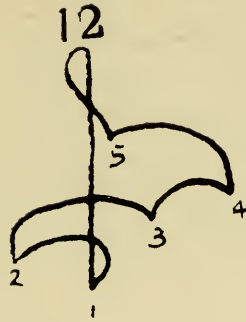
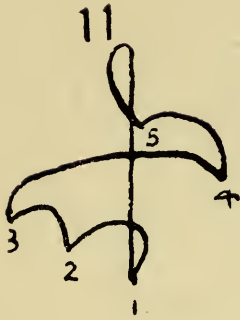
One in a bar is perhaps the hardest time of all to conduct, for except in fast dance rhythms, like the Scherzo of the Eroica Symphony, or in waltz measures, one cannot achieve real expression if the stick simply swings up and down. Some curve must be made if any legato is to be drawn out of the orchestra and this is approximately shown in Figure 16. The slower the beat and the stronger the *legato*, the greater the curve, but this must never arrive at the point of beating in a circle: the click of the one beat in a bar must never be eliminated.

We now come to the discussion of *legato*, but this must not be thought of until ease has been acquired in the simpler figures above. It is obvious that when controlling a long *cantabile* tune one cannot beat in the same way as in some passage of a *staccato* nature and it follows in slow music that after the click of each beat a certain time must elapse before the preparation for the next beat is begun; that is to say the stick must go on moving after the click is over in the fundamental direction shown in Figures 1 and 5. Particular difficulty occurs here in the case of the first beat in the bar, for the natural tendency of the stick is to bounce back once it has reached the bottom of the beat, thus ruining the expression of *legato*. It is a help to think of letting the point of the stick drop on some object like a table then instead of jumping back from it stroke the table in the one direction or the other—the direction chosen being opposite to the basic direction of the next beat; a glance at Figures 17 and 18 will explain this. Extremes are shown in Figures 17 and 18, but in considering and practising these Figures 1 and 5 must never be lost sight of and a useful half-way house will be found in Figure 4 (between Fig. 1 and Fig. 17) and Figure 8 (between Fig. 5 and Fig. 18); *i.e.*, in the shape of these figures, after eliminating the unnecessary clicks.

Starts are sometimes puzzling when they do not come on the first beat of the bar. Here the important thing to remember is that the first movement of the sound must occur when the stick has returned exactly to the Rest Position, *i.e.*, the point at which it was resting before the beginning of the movement. This is shown in Figure 19 by R, and 1 shows (as usual) the first beat of the movement. This action should take the form of a loop, for if the stick moves straight up and down a moment of indecision will probably occur at the turning point. Figure 20 shows a common but unsatisfactory way of starting, for it could only be after considerable knowledge of the conductor that an orchestra could possibly enter with any ensemble on the first beat. The more responsive players would certainly try and begin at the moment when the stick on its downward course was nearest to the point R.

3 + 2

2 + 3



Starts on subsidiary beats of the bar are achieved in exactly the same way, with the simple difference that the preparatory loop is best made in the opposite direction to that of the beat as shown in Figures 1 and 5. For instance, where the start is on the second beat of a bar the movement will be as in Figure 21 and Figures 22 and 23 are similar. There only remains a start which must be made in between two clicks, as, for instance, the Scherzo of the Beethoven 5th Symphony or the Symphonic Variations of César Franck. In this case the click is made at the Rest Position the moment the stick begins to move away from it. This for the Beethoven example is shown in Figure 24.

It will be noticed that in every one of these diagrams the click of each beat is on a higher level than its predecessor, except the first beat of the bar. There are exceptions to every rule, but it is well to aim at this gradual rise in every bar, for it greatly helps the feeling of leaning forward discussed at the end of Section 3.

Cases sometimes occur where bars of different lengths and values are combined in a passage. The classic instance is the stage music of Mozart's Don Giovanni. No rule can be formed for these, except perhaps that the beats which are common to the whole of the orchestra are best made as down beats.

A useful rule for the use of the left hand is that it should rest except when it is needed to express something that the right hand cannot do. The more effort that is made to put expression into the point of the stick the less the left hand will be needed and the more effective it will be when brought into play. Above all, care must be taken to avoid the habit of letting the left hand double the right by making identical movements throughout long passages. This must only be done at rare moments of considerable emphasis and also sometimes when the two extreme sides of the orchestra are playing a passage of difficult ensemble. Instances of this occur more often in the theatre than in a well planned concert room.

Section 6.—Practice.

The most important part of practice—the unconscious handling of the stick—has been dealt with at the end of Section 4, but one or two other suggestions may be made here.

Holding the stick perfectly loose describe the widest possible circle *with the fingers alone*, if necessary holding the right hand with the left so that there can be no movement possible at the wrist. When a loose and easy movement has been secured, let go with the left hand and slowly

widen the circle by bringing the wrist gradually into play, now holding the forearm. This done, the elbow can be introduced as a pivot, and finally the shoulder.

This is the essence of *crescendo*. The process can now be reversed—*diminuendo* to *pianissimo*—and the exercise repeated, describing the circle in the other direction.

When complete ease has been secured with this exercise on circles, it can be taken with clicks, *i.e.*, with a definite number of beats in the bar, (according to the figures in Section 5) and the looseness and consistency of the *crescendo* and *diminuendo* checked by the use of a mirror and reference to the description in Section 3.

Accelerandi and *rallentandi* can be usefully practised to gain freedom in the use of clicks. For instance, a slow 12/8 bar can be started (Figure 8) and the pace increased until the clicks on 2, 5, 8 and 11 disappear, then also 3, 6, 9, 12, resulting in a 4/4 beat (Figure 6), then 2/2 (Figure 10) and finally 1/1 (Figure 16) and the pace then decreased back to 12/8.

Section 7.—Preparing a Score.

Everybody naturally has his own pet way of preparing a score for performance, but it may perhaps be worth while to set down what has been found to be a fairly workmanlike way of doing it. It seems best to start a study of a score, whether ancient or modern, by a quick run through (away from the piano, of course) at what appears to be the performing pace of the work. If it is a modern score a very small impression of the harmony will probably result from this and it may be worth while to repeat the process two or three times until a sound grasp has been secured of the construction and architecture of the work, that is to say, of the balance of its keys and the balance of its climaxes and any other aspect of it as a complete whole. One should feel at the end of this process as if one were on the top of a high hill or in an aeroplane looking at a distant landscape. One may not be able to take note of all the detail, but the general rise and fall and scheme of the whole should be perfectly clear. Then the harmonic detail should be examined and here there is no reason why the piano should not be called in if its use speeds up the process to any extent. One should gain a complete knowledge of any difficult progression and put oneself in a position to spot instantly any misprint or wrong accidental that may crop up at rehearsal. There are several systems on which this can be done. The work can be taken and examined in detail, page by page, or each instrument or group of instruments can be followed right through the work. In fact the more numerous and various the points of view from which

the work is studied at this stage, the more profound is the ultimate knowledge, but this examination of detail must never be allowed to interfere with the perspective of the work as a whole ; and it is well occasionally to run through the work at performing pace in order to keep the vision clear.

Another point which should be examined is the question of bar rhythms, particularly in a fast moving work. It is impossible to conduct a Scherzo or a fast moving $2/4$ movement of the Beethoven or Haydn Rondo type without a very strong sense of the grouping of bars ; that is to say, without thinking of a group of four $3/4$ bars as one $12/4$ bar and of a group of four $2/4$ bars as one $8/4$. When this is once grasped the aspect of each page is enormously simplified, for the mind is unable to grasp a succession of fast 1's unless they are consciously or unconsciously grouped ; and it is far better that this grouping should be conscious, as the process of memorising will then take a very much shorter time. The time given to the study of a score should be enough to gain a knowledge of the work by heart, not perhaps of the part of every instrument, but it should be possible to write out a short score of the whole, or to play it on the piano-forte with a pretty certain knowledge of the orchestration. It should then not be necessary to make any mark at all in the score, but if there is any danger that, owing to nervousness or limited time for preparation or rehearsal, there might be anything at all uncertain in the performance, it is better to mark the score lightly at any unexpected point, for example an interpolated 3-bar rhythm in a succession of 4-bar groups, which often occurs in Beethoven Rondos, Haydn Minuets, in fact, almost anywhere. Certain important entries of an instrument that has had a long wait might also be marked. It is, however, impossible to lay too much stress on the fact that it is not the detail, but the shape and structure of the work as a whole that really matter and therefore, as the time of the performance comes near, thought must be more and more directed towards structure, and the work looked at from a distance, as it were, and as broadly as possible. The audience should be made to feel that the whole score is laid out on two gigantic pages which can be seen at a glance without even the disturbance of any turning over, and the reason that this idea must be firmly fixed in the mind during the early stages of preparation is that during the performance so much detail work inevitably arises that the issue will be obscured unless a very definite impression has been formed beforehand.

It is well to make an emotional plot of the work noting the alternation of moments of excitement and calm and taking particular account of the fact that if one movement contains four or five climaxes with identical dynamic signs these must not necessarily be given identical value. There

are very few works of art which have not one supreme point which must exceed all others in intensity, though not necessarily in dynamic intensity. Sometimes, too, a key-word can be found to describe the underlying characteristic or atmosphere of a work which will help to illuminate it in the minds of the players.

With regard to the transposing instruments there are two methods. It is possible to imagine all of these—except horns in F and the cor anglais—as being written in one or the other of the C clefs. For instance, the notes of the B flat clarinet are written on the same lines of the stave as those of a part written in the tenor clef, although the latter sound an octave lower. Accidentals of course have to be carefully accounted for. The other method is simply to get into the habit of moving the part the necessary distance up or down—in fact, merely to transpose, and this is to be recommended to all who are not specially familiar with the various C clefs. It is well to make up the mind at once which method to pursue and to stick to it.

In studying a work many people get a fixed view of the printed page into their minds: their sight helps them not only in absorption but retention. It is a faculty that can be cultivated and is useful, but it has its drawbacks, as the use of another edition (for instance, a miniature score) causes confusion and when rehearsing a concerto or opera with pianoforte accompaniment, it is then necessary to use the full score in order not to disturb the impression.

It is doubtful whether any help can be obtained from arrangements for pianoforte duet, etc. These are often badly made and can give a false idea of the balance of parts, though there are splendid exceptions, for instance, the versions for two pianofortes of the Brahms symphonies. Here, perhaps, the best possible perspective of the work could be gained from following on the full score while others perform. Gramophone and pianola reproductions can also be profitably followed in this way.

Section 8.—Rehearsal.

See also edition

A great many qualities are needed to conduct rehearsals successfully. The two most important things are to see that everybody is happy and comfortable and to waste no time. Never stop the orchestra to say what you can show with a gesture. If a passage is going very badly, persevere with it to the end of the section, then point out all the mistakes and take it right through again if there is time. Continual stoppages irritate everybody and waste a great deal of time.

It is often advisable to rehearse at a different pace from that determined for final performance. As a general rule the difference should

be on the slow side—there is more time to speak (without stopping the orchestra), or show by gesture what is wanted. It sometimes helps to exaggerate nuances at rehearsal. These then impress themselves on the minds of the players and singers and are given their right value at the performance.

An enormous amount of time in rehearsing can be saved by preparation of the copies, and here the conductor must never spare his own time in seeing that the parts, if in manuscript, are clear and their expression marks uniform, that the lettering is consistent and that the letters are in places where they will be wanted for rehearsal. Everything possible should be marked in the parts beforehand. It is almost always the conductor's fault if he has to ask the orchestra to mark anything at a rehearsal, unless he has unlimited time for this.

In conducting there is a double mental process. There is the process of thinking ahead and preparing the orchestra for what is to come, that is to say, of driving it like a locomotive. There is also the process of listening and noting difficulties and points that must be altered, in fact of watching the music, as a guard watches his train. At rehearsal the second of these is the more important. Occasionally one must take hold and drive one's forces to the top of a climax, just as a boat's crew on the day before the race does one minute of its hardest racing, but takes it pretty easy otherwise. The main thing at a rehearsal is to watch results and to act on them. At a performance it is the other way about : the conductor must take the lead. It is then too late to alter things like faulty balance or wrong expression but the structure and balance of the work as a whole and the right spirit are the two things of paramount importance.

Section 9.—Performance.

The first thing necessary in a performance is to set the exact pace at once, for it often happens that a work is started a shade too fast or too slow and only settles into its proper pace somewhere about the tenth bar. In Section 7 the importance of forming a very definite idea of the emotional plan of the work has been emphasised and the pace is naturally based on this. Unless the conductor's mind is made up for some days beforehand exactly what pace he intends to take the work an indecisive start will almost certainly result. It is useful to fix on some key passage—perhaps a passage in faster notes—which can be thought of immediately before giving the sign to start. This will often set the pace better than thinking of the actual first few bars. If the composer has given metronome suggestions these should be carefully considered though it is not necessary

to have the instrument. It is quite enough to judge the pace of a few of the salient passages from the ticking of a watch—300 per minute—so that 150, 100, 75, 60, and 50 are definitely ascertainable.

Reference has already been made in Section 8 to the double mental process in conducting : driving the engine and sitting in the guard's van. In performance, the conductor must drive the engine. He will find if he is doing this properly he will be perfectly conscious of all that goes on—that is to say, some part of him will find its way into the guard's van ; but he should not think of this, it is now too late to correct mistakes. He will be kept busy with a mass of detail in different directions and it will be difficult for him to keep in mind the structure of the work as a whole, the importance of which has already been dwelt upon in Section 7. He must accustom himself to think now and then (the oftener the better) of his ground-plan of the work, as the engine-driver glances at his schedule in the course of his journey.

A word may perhaps be said here about violence of gesture. Varied opinions of listeners as to whether they like to see a conductor throwing himself about or whether they like to see him restrained and dignified need not trouble us. We have already agreed that we only want the ears of the audience and the eyes of the orchestra. There is no question that if an orchestra is in the habit of seeing continual violence of gesture it will become unconscious of subtleties and as we know that the object of technique is to achieve our end with the greatest economy of means why should we use our elbow to express what our wrist can do ? We never find that the three highest peaks in a mountain range are the same height, or the depressions between them the same depth. So it is in music, and we must save ourselves, especially physically, for the very highest moments and for them only.

Section 10.—Accompaniments.

Accompaniments are really the hardest tests of technique, for it is very much easier to express one's own ideas on a thing than to absorb the ideas of somebody else and impress these immediately on the people under one's control. A few points may be useful. In many cases where complicated passages are to be found in the right hand of a pianoforte work, the left is playing a simple figure which can easily be heard and followed. In fact, at any moment of distress "listen to the left hand" is a reliable lifebelt. Copies of cadenzas in classical concertos are not often supplied to the conductor, but his ear will tell him when he is getting to the dominant harmony which invariably goes before the entry of the orchestra. The difficulty of a large orchestra drowning the soloist

is considerable and here I think the test is whether the members of the orchestra can themselves hear the soloist. If they can it is perfectly safe; if they cannot, it is sometimes all right, but usually not. In many cases very heavy brass is written in a passage that is purely accompaniment and here the use of the *forte piano* is of enormous help. This can be followed by a *crescendo* at the end of the bar and a new *forte piano* at the beginning of the next bar.

Ritenuti in concertos are a great temptation to induce the unwary to neglect the warning (early in Section 5) never to let the stick stop. Not only is an ugly break caused in the line of the rhythm, but a bad ensemble will usually result in the first *à tempo* bar, for when the stick stops the players are uncertain what is going to happen next and while it is moving they know where they are. It is thus particularly necessary in concertos never to stretch to arm's length: a certain amount of room must be kept in hand for any unexpected bend of the rhythm on the part of the soloist.

Another difficulty in concertos is the entry of the orchestra after a rapid solo passage, particularly a scale in free time. It is impossible to depend entirely on the sense of pitch for a clean start and it is a help to divide the scale rhythmically in some way, or to mark it off into octaves, watching the recurrence of either the key note of the scale or the octaves of the note on which the orchestra enters. It must be noted at the rehearsal whether the soloist plays the scale at an even pace throughout, and allowances can be made if necessary.

It is very useful, when in the audience at concerts, to follow a concerto as if one were conducting. If necessary, conduct with one finger and note the differences between your imaginary performance and the performance that is going on. A great deal can be learned from really acute attention to concerts.

Section 11.—A Few General Points.

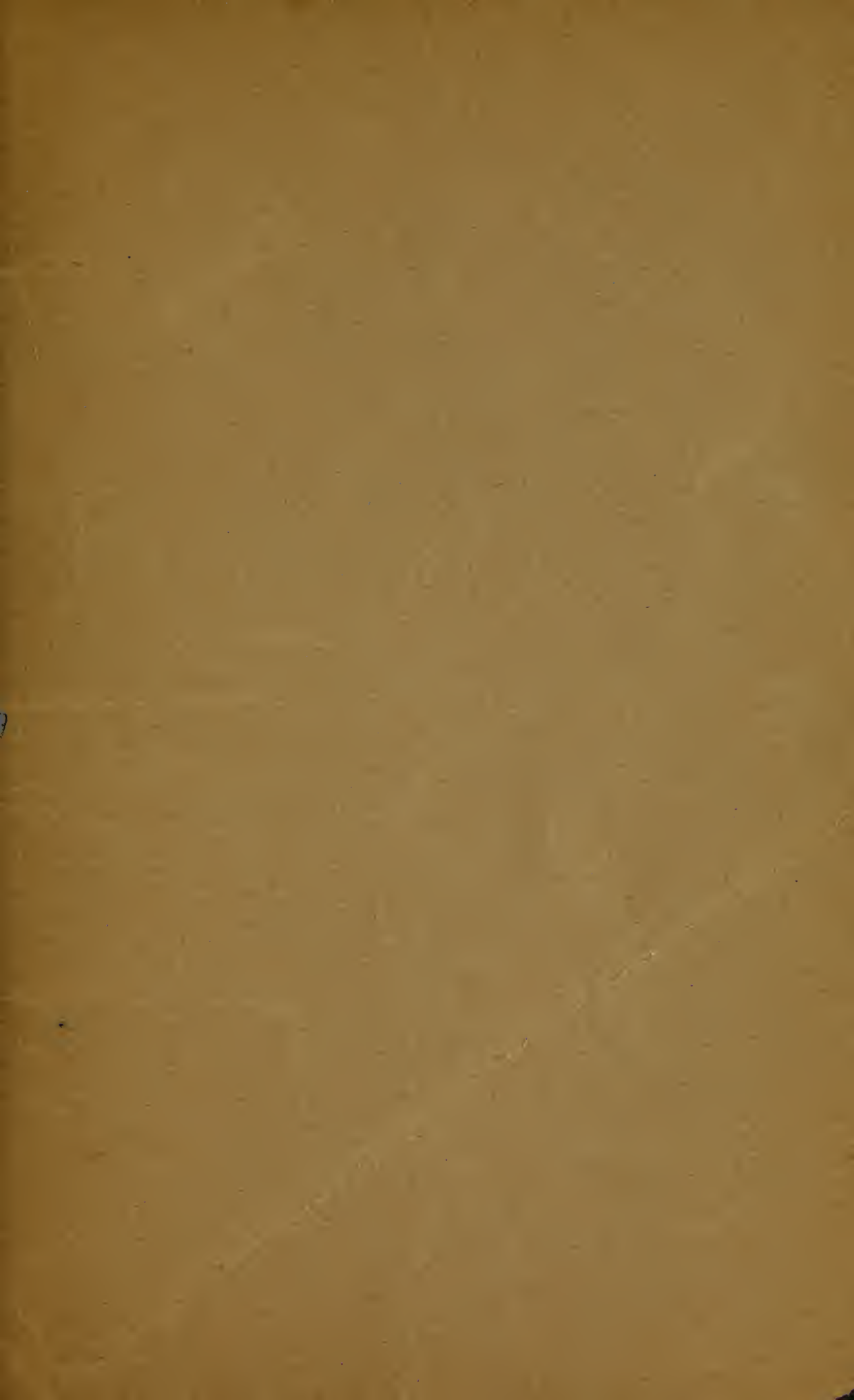
Never lose an opportunity of singing in a choir or of sitting in the middle of an orchestra, particularly if you don't play an orchestral instrument. Follow the part of the instrument nearest to you and you will gain a valuable insight into the point of view of the orchestral player.

Even if you have no voice sing in the Choral Class; you can never learn to conduct unless you learn to be conducted.

Remember, in conducting, that your thought and gestures will almost certainly be too late rather than too early. Anticipate everything.

When actually conducting, never think of technique ; it is too late by that time. It is your job to impress what you want on the orchestra and choir somehow. How you do it is a matter for consideration afterwards, or better still, beforehand.

If you are suddenly called on to conduct the Choral Class, don't forget the essential differences between choir and orchestra. The choir is much larger, most of them are sitting above you and many are much farther away from you than orchestral players ever are. So make sure that they can all see clearly and understand you and remember particularly the Line of Sight (Section 2).



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